I SAY
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I ES-SAY

We sit down with a first timer and ask them
how they found creating their first video essay

How did you feel about creating your first video essay?
I was excited to explore sound and movement, as
this was something I initially wanted to investigate,
through the hybridisation of commercial editorial
magazine design. Translating print into digital in an
exciting and effective way, is something that I think is
lacking in digital magazine publishing. My project was
based on editorial magazine design. so the obvious
thing to me was to recreate all my work as a digital
version, in a way that I thought improved what exists.

Who inspired you?
In *Thinking Through the Video Essay*, Catherine
Grant states how she doesn't start with a script and
that "the pleasure and importance of them is precisely
that they don't begin with writing." This idea appealed
to me and I tried this approach in this iteration, but I
found it really hard! I drifted not only through varying
ways of presenting the content, but also through
varying themes that emerged from my project. There
was no clear focus or overall structure, and I failed
epically, working this way, on this project, despite
having worked this way throughout the project to
date. I tried multiple versions, syncing movement to
music and using title cards to tell the story. It failed
to communicate comprehensively. I did create a nice
snippet of my 100 iterations, translated into musical
instruments that played across the screen, but this
wasn't enough to hold the whole project together.
Grant also acknowledges how "thinking about how
the video essay enables thinking." I experienced this
later when bringing my essay together and seeing new
findings in my own work.

How did it come together?
It didn't! I appreciate that this approach may well
work for another project, but in tutor crits it became
clear that I didn't know what my focus was, I was
trying to put too much content, and too many ideas in.

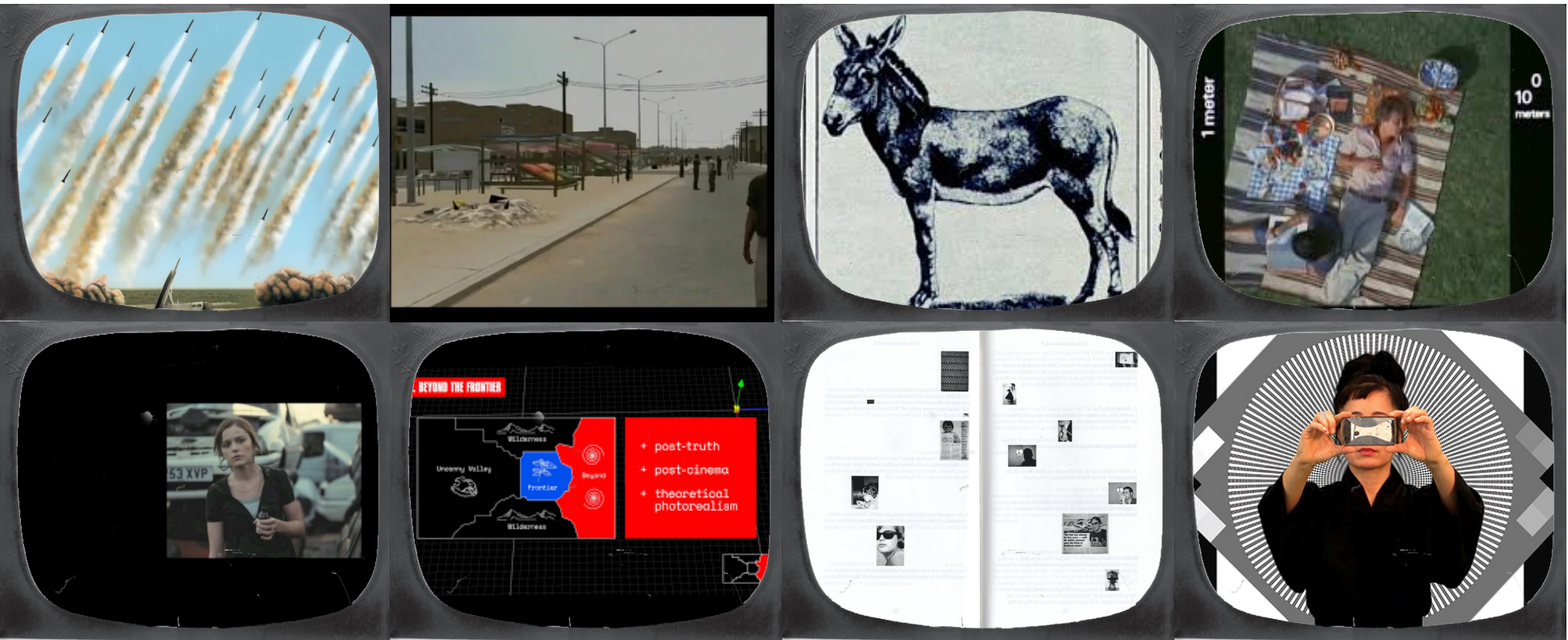**So where did you go from here?**
I changed tack to utilise my work in its printed form,
despite being in the digital world. In its printed form I
marked up my layouts, as we did in the late 90s when
sending proofs to the retouchers and repro houses.
I used this editorial device as marginalia in my
iterations of affordance, marking up where the work
had been inspired by references, and equally how the
work had evolved and informed my position.

Did anyone influence you on this iteration?
Yes, Alan Warburton. *Goodbye Uncanny Valley*
was bizarrely captivating in a very straight way.
This isn't something that usually inspires me, but
I watched the whole video from beginning to end.
Warburton told the story so clearly, on a subject I am
not ofay with, that I understood really well, from the
clear structure of the video. Using a map, to map the
journey, gave it great clarity.

**Why do you think you were inspired by this usually
uninspiring reference?**
I think in retrospect I was lacking any structure at all
in this new area. It inspired me to think about creating
a editorially designed contents page as my 'map',
that I could go back to after each section, to clearly
navigate through the the content.

Catherine Grant (2022)
Thinking Through the Video
Essay. 1st October 2022.
Available at: Vimeo (Accessed:
15th May 2024).

Gander, R. (2024) 'Loose
Associations' [Lecture]. Central
Saint Martins. 20th May 2024.

John Smith (1975) Associations.
2014. Available at: Vimeo
(Accessed: 15th May 2024).

Music Art Fashion Forward
(2024) Goodbye Uncanny
Valley. Available at: https://
www.maff.tv/watch/goodbye-
uncanny-valley (Accessed: 15th
May 2024).

Oliver Laric (2010) Versions.
2021. Available at: Vimeo
(Accessed: 15th May 2024).

Sounds cool, how did that go?
Well, I didn't actually do this, but I did streamline all
my content to be printed pages of my work marked up
with digital marginalia (so it would read clearly and
so I could animate it). This was more successful, but
it felt quite dry and dull. In tutor crits we discussed
using just words on the screen to tell the story.
Judging how long someone needs to read the text is
challenging, it's also distracting from the content,
and with music as well it makes it quite hard to digest
everything. Again, I had tried to put too much in, and
it was convoluted with too much text, and too many
ideas, with not enough time to read it. I was learning a
lot of ways of how not to do things!

Did you manage to make anything at all?!
I was running out of time, so I asked myself, "What do
I like?" I like John Smith's *Associations*; Oliver Laric's
Versions; and Ryan Gander's *Loose Association*s.
All of these are super simple, framed images, with a
commentary that has a twist. In tutor crits I had some
good advice to write the script first, something I was
trying to avoid, then place visuals with it and focus on
JUST ONE THING.

How did that go?
I created my version of this format, using lots of clean
space, only my work, and writing the script first. It
isn't co-evolving, as all of my project has been, and it
isn't very experimental with audio nor movement. It
feels like the first draft. I wish I had more time to take
this and start to refine, add humour, add sound and
make it what I wanted it to be.

> "I was learning lots of ways of how not
> to do things! It feels like a first draft, I
> wish I had got to this point quicker."

Any advice for others working on video essays?
This video essay was really challenging for me, I
procrastinated for far too long and couldn't focus. I
have learnt a process of sorts that is reoccurring in my
work, and I need to start listening to. For me, I need to
write everything out, academically, belt and braces,
then I can zoom out, like Powers of Ten and see things
more clearly. From this distance I can then subvert,
play and have fun with it. I hope I remember this next
time!

How did the process progress your project overall?
Creating the video essay allowed me to find greater
connections of female representaion throughout
all of my work. Whereas initially I was looking at
hybrid design, what emerged throughout the process
was a deception of female representation through
partirachal systems. I started to uncover polarisation
of what is 'real' and 'projections'. There is something
really interesting about light and ambience emerging,
ripping up all the patriarchal rule books, and looking
to other cultures to develop and progress editorial
design, by women, to better represent women. We
seem to be stuck in a cycle that is so ingrained in
society we don't question it. Let's ask questions!

Clockwise from top left;
Versions, Serious Games,
Associations, Powers
of Ten, How Not to be
Seen: A Fucking Didactic
Educational .MOV File.,
Loose Assocoations,
Goodbye Uncanny Valley,
Thinking Through the
Video Essay

BRITANNICA IMAGE QUEST